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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000023

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: UDPS, TSHISEKEDI ASSERT CHANGE IN DIRECTION

REF: 05 KINSHASA 1855

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[11.](#) (SBU) Summary: In an ostensible reversal of its political strategy, the Union for Democratic and Social Progress (UDPS) announced it will participate in the DRC's 2006 elections, with UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi running as a candidate for president. As with previous messages from Tshisekedi and others in the UDPS, the devil is in the details. End summary.

[12.](#) (U) In a January 1 message to the Congolese people, Union for Democratic and Social Progress (UDPS) leader Etienne Tshisekedi wrote that his party would participate in the

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DRC's 2006 elections and intended to lead the Congolese people to victory over the forces of "chaos and humiliation." Tshisekedi also wrote that the UDPS would work to ensure the

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electoral process is "credible and equitable," unlike, according to Tshisekedi, the country's December 18-19 constitutional referendum.

[13.](#) (SBU) In his New Year's message, Tshisekedi thanked the international community for its support of the democratic process in the DRC and its efforts at establishing peace. This was a sentiment at odds with earlier attacks on the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) as essentially colluding with the government. He also applauded the UNSC resolution calling for the disarmament of armed groups in the DRC, and welcomed the International Court of Justice decision on December 19 against Uganda for plundering the DRC's resources during its wartime occupation in the eastern DRC beginning in 1998.

[14.](#) (SBU) In January 3 letters to the President of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and to SRSG Swing, UDPS Secretary General Remy Masamba affirmed the party's intention to take part in elections. The UDPS called upon the CEI, with the support of the international community, to re-open voter registration centers nationwide for the benefit of those Congolese who were "excluded" during the previous enrollment period. (Note: Voter registration officially ended nationwide December 15. Tshisekedi and his hard-line supporters boycotted the registration process and are therefore currently ineligible to run for office and to vote in the elections. End note.)

[15.](#) (SBU) Since the establishment of the DRC's transitional government in 2003, the UDPS has refused to participate in the country's political process, calling for a boycott of the voter registration drive and the referendum. Despite the UDPS's decision to boycott, 25 million Congolese (of an estimated maximum 28 million eligible) registered to vote. While voter turnout in the UDPS strongholds of Kasai Orientale and Kinshasa was low (36 and 46 percent, respectively), nearly two-thirds of all registered voters nationwide participated in the December 18-19 referendum with over 80 percent voting in favor of the new constitution.

[16.](#) (SBU) In subsequent conversations with post, UDPS officials said the party will demand to be represented on both the CEI and the High Media Authority, as are the major factions of the transitional government. UDPS political adviser Joseph Mukendi said the party is urging its members to run in elections at all levels of government: provincial, legislative and presidential. Mukendi also said Tshisekedi himself plans to run for president.

[17.](#) (C) Comment: Tshisekedi's apparent decision to enter the political process at the last moment may be a realization that the party's strategy of boycotting has been a failure. Tshisekedi had hoped that by boycotting the electoral

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process, the entire system would collapse, be declared "illegitimate," and Congolese voters would turn to him as a political savior. His latest announcement is a last attempt to become the DRC's "rightful" leader, which he considers himself to be. The UDPS position needs to be further verified, however, as Tshisekedi is prone to making grand political statements which often contain hidden conditions. For example, Tshisekedi refers to measures which must be taken to "correct" the electoral process. He also indirectly

referenced steps needed that would re-open the entire transition process -- which were presented during the UN Security Council visit in November and subsequently rejected as unreasonable (reftel). The CIAT plans to discuss the Tshisekedi statement and its implications at its regular

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meeting this week. Informal discussion among several members, however, suggest a shared sense of caution about what Tshisekedi's new public stance really represents. Rather than restart immediately CIAT "facilitation" talks that were killed by Tshisekedi's pre-referendum hard-line statement condemning the whole Transition process, for example, the CIAT may wish to ask UN Deputy SRSG Menkerios to undertake direct but informal discussions with Tshisekedi himself -- and not with his representatives -- to get a clear and explicit read of his conditions to engaging in the electoral process.

18. (C) Comment continued: The UDPS declaration puts tremendous pressure on the CEI and carries with it some risks. On the one hand, if the CEI decides to re-open registration centers to accommodate Tshisekedi and the UDPS, the already tight electoral calendar may be delayed further. On the other hand, if the CEI does not re-open registration, Tshisekedi will no doubt claim he is being unfairly excluded

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from the elections and will work to undermine their legitimacy. Either scenario places Tshisekedi in the role of "spoiler," giving him undue power and influence over a process which he has chosen not to participate in thus far. End comment.
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